Hands Across the Hudson

Opportunities for Cooperation in Controlling Combined Sewer Overflows

The Hudson River in the Capital District has seen an amazing resurgence over the past two decades. Nature's main artery for this area was once so polluted by municipal and industrial waste that it was regarded as an eyesore instead of the precious resource it is. Because of the vision and commitment of local government mayors, councils, legislatures, private sector officials and state government, the Hudson has begun to regain its proper place as the gem of New York's Capital Region and an historic landmark for the nation. As Capital District leaders know, a healthy river is key to their communities' well-being.

Water-related tourism can support many associated businesses, and riverfront properties often rent for several times the value of similar properties located inland–as long as the water is clean.

Alan Mapes

Dutch Apple Cruises

image courtesy of RiverSpark(Troy Visitor Center)

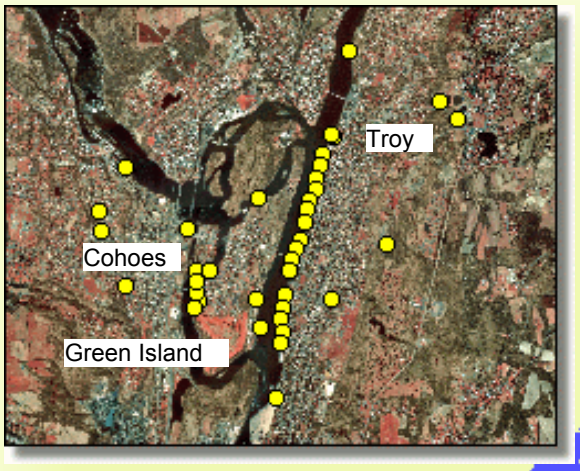
In the early 70s, the river was neither fishable nor swimmable. Today the mid-Hudson is a world-class striped bass and shad fishery. It's time to add another chapter to this success story by controlling Combined Sewer Overflows – to help establish water quality suitable for swimming and enhanced waterfront uses.

One of today's biggest challenges to realizing the full potential of riverfront communities is *Combined Sewer Overflows*. Waters receiving overflows can be unsightly, smelly and unhealthy during wet weather.

Now there are new opportunities for working together to correct this problem.

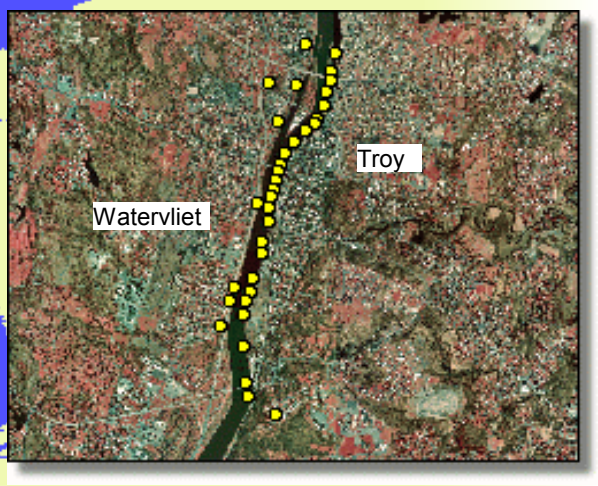
George E. Pataki, Governor
State of New York

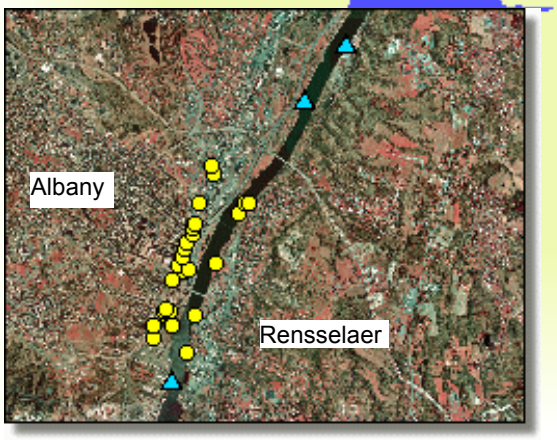
Erin M. Crotty, Commissioner
Dept. of Environmental Conservation



Troy: 49 overflows
Cohoes: 16 overflows
Green Island:3 overflows

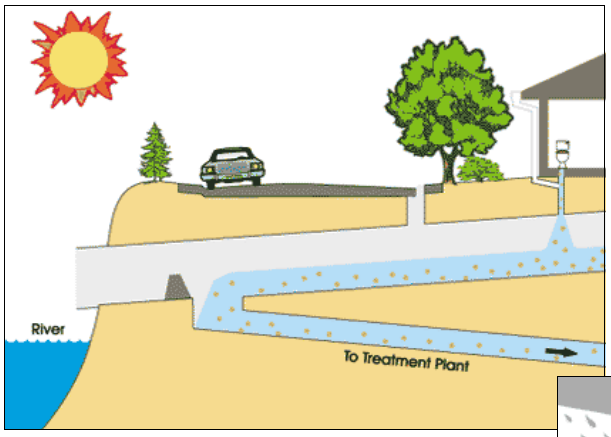
During wet weather, six communities discharge street litter, raw sewage and bacteria from almost 100 individual Combined Sewer Overflows into the Hudson River from Cohoes to Rensselaer.





Albany: 12 overflows
Rensselaer: 8 overflows
Watervliet: 5 overflows

CSO
treatment plant

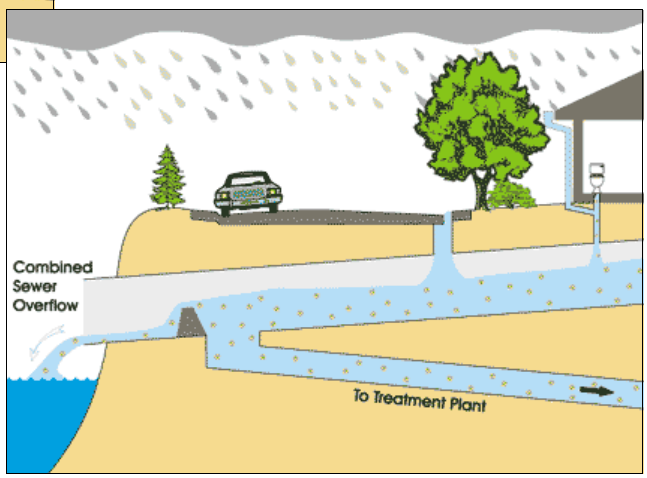


Dry

Combined sewer systems, usually older sewers, are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. Most of the time, combined sewer systems transport all of their wastewater to a sewage treatment plant, where it is treated and then discharged to a water body.

During periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt, however, the wastewater volume in a combined sewer system can exceed the capacity of the sewer system or treatment plant.

It can be unpredictable when combined sewer systems will overflow and discharge excess wastewater directly to nearby streams, rivers, or other waterbodies.



Wet

City of Edmonton

Save the Bay

New York City Department of Environmental Protection

New York City Department of Environmental Protection

These overflows can contain untreated human and industrial waste, pathogens, toxic materials and street litter, making swimming and boating unpleasant and sometimes unhealthy.

Hands Across the Hudson - *Opportunities for Cooperation in Controlling Combined Sewer Overflows*

> *"The banks of a river may belong to one man or one industry or one State, but the waters which flow between the banks should belong to all the people."*
> -- President Lyndon B. Johnson, signing the Clean Water Act of 1965

The Hudson, like all rivers, is not bound by governmental borders. It takes the cooperation of all communities, upstream and downstream, on the east bank and on the west bank, working together to address the CSO problem and its impacts. A cooperative approach is the most cost effective option for the participants and is best for the environment. Working independently would be costly and would fail to achieve the environmental benefits we all desire.

The State Can Help

Since 1998, this administration has provided encouragement, technical assistance and funding through the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, Environmental Protection Fund, and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. To date, more than $7 million of Bond Act Funding has been committed to 11 projects designed to correct the water quality problems caused by CSOs in the Capital District.

This year, $2 million has been set aside from the state Environmental Protection Fund specifically for the six Capital District municipalities and county sewer districts with CSOs to use to develop a Phase I Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) for the combined sewer overflows in this area of the Hudson River. Under the Phase I plan, communities will identify how to control CSOs. After a Phase I plan has been developed, a second year of funding (Phase II) will be available to help implement the plan.

How to Get Money

During the summer of 2003, the State will issue a call for Water Quality Improvement Projects, including the Phase I Long Term Control Plan. Capital District communities are encouraged to join together and develop a common application. Communities can use in-kind services and their own investments to control CSOs to provide the required 50 percent match. This year's $2 million will be available for:

- developing public participation plans,
- evaluating water quality impacts from CSOs and other outfalls,
- identifying and charactering outfalls,
- evaluating controls and developing cost performance curves, and
- identifying CSO control alternatives.

Combined sewer overflows are keeping the Hudson River from realizing its full value as a natural and community resource. A cleaner river benefits the citizens, communities, and the entire region. Now, Capital District communities have the opportunity to make the mid-Hudson the showcase it deserves to be. By working cooperatively on the Long Term Control Plans, Capital District communities can decide the best path to cost effectively and scientifically improve the Hudson River for our generation and generations to come.

New York City Department of Environmental Protection